

---CONSERVATION DISTRICTS OF IOWA (CDI)---

CONNECTIONS

The Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) informs, educates, and leads Iowans through our local soil and water conservation districts to promote conservation of natural resources.



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CDI EXECUTIVE BOARD:

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CDI OFFICE STAFF:

Executive Director: John Whitaker
Water Quality Specialist: Carlee Sabus
Office Manager: Brenda Shannon

Office Phone: 515-289-8300
Office Address:
315 East 5th Street, Suite #134
Des Moines, IA. 50309
Website: <https://cdiowa.org>

From: CDI President Dennis Carney

Welcome to the first edition of the Conservation Districts of Iowa's newsletter "Connections". It is our hope to release an edition every month or so. Through Connections we will inform you what CDI is doing now and what is planned for the future. We also plan to feature projects planned and completed by our staff, our Board of Directors, and most importantly by Districts across the state.

Staying informed about what other districts are doing is a great way to become inspired to try new things in our own districts. We will also use Connections to introduce you to our staff and Board of Directors. Many changes are happening at CDI, especially the upcoming addition of our five planning coordinators and the formation of a statewide district employees' organization. We look forward to explaining how these changes will affect your District.

It is my hope that Connections will become a valuable resource for you. Again, welcome and thank you for your commitment to protect Iowa's natural resources.

2019 CDI Annual Conference

The 73rd CDI annual conference was held at the Gateway Hotel and Conference Center in Ames, Iowa, on August 19–20. Approximately 290 commissioners and staff attended the two-day event. Conference highlights included an address by NRCS Chief Matt Lohr, remarks by Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig and several thought-provoking breakout sessions. Thank you to the Commissioners and staff who attended. On an additional note, the Gateway Center did a great job hosting us and we will return there for at least the next two years.



NRCIS Chief Matt Lohr



Secretary Mike Naig



State Conservationist
Kurt Simon



Division Director
Susan Kozak



Champion Commissioners

During the CDI Annual Business Meeting twenty-nine Champion Commissioners were recognized. These Commissioners had attended Legislative Day, a Spring Regional session, and the 2019 CDI annual conference. Each Champion Commissioner was presented with a custom CDI folder. Congratulations to these Commissioners for their outstanding involvement in CDI and their District's activities.

Staff Spotlight

Carlee Sabus - CDI Water Quality Specialist



Carlee has been with CDI since July of 2018. She is an Iowa native and grew up in the Des Moines area. Carlee graduated from Iowa State University with a focus in Natural Resources, where she gained a passion for conserving our land and water quality for current and future generations.

In the near future, CDI will add five new district planners. It is our plan that one position will be based in the Des Moines office and, in addition to some planning assistance, will serve as CDI's person in charge of communications. The other four positions will be located in the field to assist districts in determining their resource concerns and writing meaningful annual and five-year work plans. NRCS is funding these positions. The district planners will be a great help to districts as we improve our conservation planning process. **See page 4 for more details.**

Soil Health Field Days



In 2019 CDI, through a grant from the National Wildlife Federation Cover Crop Champion program, sponsored or co-sponsored five Cover Crop Champion/Soil Health Field Days. Over 200 people attended these field days where they learned about the conservation benefits of cover crops and the benefits of soil health. Producers are beginning to understand that better soil health leads to higher profit through lower costs and equal or better yields than fields that are not cover cropped.



At one event, a producer mentioned that he had been doing soil testing on one particular field for seven years while he both no-till farmed the field and used cover crops every year. During this time, his organic matter in the field had increased by 1%. Not only does this increase the available nutrients in the field without adding commercial nutrients, this has allowed the producer to store over one ton of carbon per acre.

The Cover Crop Champion program is designed to target 'middle adopters', or those producers who are not the first to try cover crops but are those who have witnessed their neighbors try cover crops and then continue to use them. These middle adopters are the producers who will exponentially increase the acres of cover crops in Iowa when they fully adopt cover crop use.

Resolutions

The Board of Directors will continue working to implement the eight resolutions that were approved by commissioners this year. Two of the measures, funding for education coordinators and the Iowa buffer requirement proposal, have already sparked a fair amount of discussion in Des Moines among lawmakers and state employees, and that is really the purpose behind the entire process.

NACD

It is our intention to update you on how NACD policy and activities affect and support what we do in Iowa. Looking ahead, the NACD annual meeting will be held in Las Vegas in February 2020. President Carney is CDI's representative on the NACD Board of Directors and will participate in a series of Board meetings while at the annual gathering. Also, Iowa has a seat on the NACD Legislative Committee where resolutions from all states with national scope are debated, refined, and voted upon. CDI Vice-President Jack Boyer serves as an alternate delegate and will participate in the legislative hearings.

Scholarship Fund

Last year CDI awarded a total of \$9,000.00 in scholarships to nine Iowa high school seniors. Scholarship money is raised primarily through the auction held at annual conference; this year the auction raised about \$7,800.00. We would like to continue funding the scholarship program at current levels, so if your district was not able to attend conference or you are feeling regrets that you did not spend more at the auction, CDI is happy to accept additional money. Send contributions to Brenda Shannon at the office address.

Legislative Update

If you have access to email and are interested in receiving an update each week the Legislature is in session, please share your email address with CDI. We will not send you spam, just the weekly update. Also, will not share your email address with anyone else. The process is simple, just send a 'request legislative update' email to admin@cdiowa.org and we will add you to our list.

From CDI Executive Director John Whitaker: Five-Year Plan Update

The chapters of the Iowa Administrative Code are the rules that implement the laws of our state. The section governing Soil and Water Resource Conservation Plans is Chapter 27-22 and defines what the plans are to entail. The work that went into the initial plans was very good but due to the required information, not the most exciting reading available to us in the conservation field.

As we prepare to assist you in writing updates to your five-year plans, we are creating a template that will offer the public we serve a better view of the important work Commissioners perform. We will move all of the statistics about the district and the current use of the land to the back of the plan and put the top priorities that you want to accomplish in the next five years on the front page. The public will no longer have to wade through all the details to get to what you believe needs to be done. We are really looking forward to working with all Districts on this project! **CDI is your organization.** Please let us know how we can help you be effective Commissioners and do your important part in preserving Iowa's soil and improving Iowa's water quality!